

Downtown Development District Program Will Expand

Governor Markell announces state will accept new applications to grow initiative after successful start in Wilmington, Dover, and Seaford

- *Delaware's Office of State Planning Coordination will administer the application process.*
- *Applications from local governments interested in being designated as a Downtown Development District are due to the OSPC on or before June 1, 2016.*
- *Application materials are available at stateplanning.delaware.gov.*
- *To date, \$9.7 million in program grants is leveraging more than \$160 million in private investment in downtown districts in Dover, Seaford and Wilmington*

Wilmington, DE – Building on efforts to revitalize downtown areas statewide, Governor Jack Markell announced on Wednesday that the state will accept new applications from local governments interested in being designated as Downtown Development Districts.

Residential, commercial and industrial development in designated districts may qualify for a menu of local and state incentives, including grant rebates to offset the cost of private investment.

Governor Markell made the announcement Wednesday morning in Wilmington at the 2016 Downtown Delaware "Revitalize!" Conference.

"Delaware's downtowns are drivers of economic growth and prosperity, and this program has proven that a small amount of state support can catalyze major private investment to energize these key areas," **said Governor Markell**. "We look

forward to building on the program's success, and supporting more investment."

The DDD program, initially proposed by the Governor in his 2014 State of the State address, was created by legislation passed unanimously by the General Assembly that spring.

In January 2015, Governor Markell selected areas of Dover, Seaford and Wilmington as Delaware's first Downtown Development Districts. Wednesday's announcement will allow cities to once again apply for the designation.

DDD Projects Underway

So far, \$9.7 million in grant funding is leveraging more than \$160 million of private investment in the current districts.

Projects include a 355-space public parking garage at 9th and Shipley Streets, which will make it easier for Delawareans to drive downtown, watch a concert, or have dinner at one of Wilmington's restaurants. Above the garage, more than 200 apartments are planned with 12,000 square feet in ground-floor retail space.

Central Delaware Habitat for Humanity is building homes on vacant lots on New Street and Kirkwood Street in downtown Dover, investments that are helping revitalize the community through homeownership.

In Seaford, grants are helping support the construction of quality apartment buildings on the Nanticoke River, with boat docks outside. The apartments will help attract more people to live and work in Seaford, a city that is critically important to the economy in western Sussex County.

The Delaware State Housing Authority administers the program.

"We know the DDD program is working to encourage investment in Delaware's downtowns," **said Anas Ben Addi, Director of the Delaware State Housing Authority.** "As we expand the program,

we expect even more progress statewide.”

Dover Mayor Robin Christiansen said the designation of downtown Dover as a Downtown Development District is helping the city revitalize its neighborhoods.

“The Downtown Development Districts program has helped people to realize the investment opportunities we have in downtown Dover,” **said Mayor Christiansen.** “We are currently in the early stages, but this will ultimately make a significant improvement to downtown in both business and residential neighborhoods.”

The Downtown Development Districts Act of 2014 assigns the Office of State Planning Coordination with the responsibility to administer the application process for new Downtown Development Districts. The 2016 Application Form and Guidelines will be available on the OSPC website after noon today, March 16, 2016.

Applications will be reviewed based on the need for the Downtown Development District and its potential positive impacts; the quality of the district plan; and the quality of local incentives. Local governments interested in being designated as a Downtown Development District must submit their applications to the OSPC on or before June 1, 2016.

“I am extremely enthusiastic about this program,” **said Constance Holland, State Planning Director at the Office of State Planning Coordination.** “I sincerely believe that the Downtown Development District program is the backbone for the revitalization of downtowns throughout Delaware.”

The OSPC and its planners will serve as a resource for any government interested in applying to become a designated Downtown Development District. OSPC planners can provide information about the application form, data from the Census, assistance with mapping, or general advice about the program.

Local governments are encouraged to contact the OSPC early in the process of preparing an application to ensure that a complete application is submitted by June 1.

“The fact that the Governor and legislators recognize how important historic downtowns are to the people of Delaware gives local governments a lot of encouragement,” **said Sam Cooper, Mayor of Rehoboth Beach and president of the Delaware League of Local Governments.** “This state funding leverages significant private funds to make things happen in our downtowns. Bringing activity back downtown increases vitality, creates jobs and builds community pride – strengthening a whole community.”